

CAMDEN RIVER WALK and PUBLIC LANDING PROJECT
PUBLIC FORUM #3
Minutes of Meeting
June 24, 2013

The Public Forum was convened at 6:30 at the Mary Taylor Middle School by Brian Hodges, Director of Development, with an estimated 70 people attending.

1. Introductions & Background: Brian Hodges

Mr. Hodges introduced the project to those in attendance who were not familiar with the background and history of the two concurrent projects – the River Walk and the Public Landing Redesign, leading them through the genesis of the projects within the Downtown Master Plan; explaining the grant to develop designs and plans for each project and the process of selecting a design team; and, discussing the timeline of the public meetings – past and future – stressing the importance of public input to the Team. He explained how this particular meeting fit into the schedule to completion; how people can obtain more information on past and future meetings and the proposals on the Town's website, and he asked them to keep two dates in mind; September 9 for the presentation of the preferred designs and September 24 for the delivery of the final schematic plans.

Mr. Hodges introduced the various people, committees and organizations participating in the project, noting that the great diversity and scope of representation of Town interests is intended to ensure that all points of view are heard.

- **The TYLin Project Team:** Darin Bryant, TYLin International, Consultants' Project Manager; Sarah Witte, Landscape Architect (Pathways Project); Dan Bannon, Baker Design Consultants (Public Landing Project); Mike Thompson Penobscot Environmental (environmental consultants); Northeast Civil Solutions, engineers and land planners; and Planning Decisions, of Portland
- **Camden's Advisory Team:** Members of the Camden Team are part of the Working Group, along with the TYLin Team and Town Staff. They include representatives of the Parks and Recreation Committee, Camden-Rockport Pathways Committee, Penobscot Bay Regional Chamber of Commerce, Camden Library Complex, Conservation Commission, Harbor Committee, Downtown Business Group, CEDAC, and a Knox Mill Condos resident representative

When developing the proposals they will share this evening the Team has taken into consideration comments heard at the first two Public Forums, those heard in one-on-one interviews with individuals and groups, and those passed along through the Development Office. Following this evening's presentation there will be another opportunity for comment during an "open house" feedback session, and he asked those in attendance to stay for that portion of the evening's program and offer their comments.

2. Riverwalk Project Approach: Sarah Witte

Ms. Witte, a Landscape Architect with DeWan and Associates, explained how the Team has approached creating the Preliminary Concept Plan she will present this evening. Again addressing those in the audience not familiar with the project, Ms. Witte briefly explained the concept design tool called the Emerald Necklace and how it has been employed in developing this pathway proposal. Providing a brief history of the previous public presentation she shared a summary of the public comments from the first Public Forum, and then reviewed the benefits of the Riverwalk as they apply to individuals and families, neighborhoods and communities, transportation, health and the economy. Ms. Witte stressed the fact that studies have shown that property values increase in relation to the proximity of trails and open spaces.

This information is outlined in the Minutes of the first forum and they, along with the evening's Power Point presentations, will be available on the Town's website at: <http://www.camdenmaine.gov> . Follow the Riverwalk and Public Landing link from the Banner; on the project home page find the link to Community Meetings.

Ms. Witte suggested that participants consider the concept of the River Walk as a plan in flux that will evolve over time. The drawings being presented this evening are best thought of in "freeze-frame" fashion - a series of places linked together based on comments gathered at meetings and in conversations with various committees. The Plan will evolve further from comments heard this evening, and the audience should keep this in mind as they review this proposal.

❖ Camden's Emerald Necklace:

The method of identifying special places first, then finding ways to link them is a landscape design concept originating with Frederick Law Olmstead, who called these places "gems" and the result the Emerald Necklace. This Preliminary Plan links Camden's gems together – places the Community has told them are special and unique to Camden. The guiding principle in proposing links to these places -- both existing and proposed -- is respect for private property. This evening these "gems, named and numbered on the Preliminary Concept Plan, are shown being linked together using existing pathways and sidewalks. There are proposed short-term links and proposed long range links shown on the Plan as well. As discussions with property-owners progress, some of those proposed links could become part of the actual plan for the River Walk; they might be shown as a spur off the main pathway; or they might remain as proposed or removed all together. The River Walk will not only take people from place to place along this pathway, but eventually it could connect to other places in Town. The Team is working with the Pathways Committee to show the existing and proposed trails and pathways on the proposal that could be linked to the pathway sometime in the future to extend connections to other places in Town.

❖ Preliminary Concept Plan:

Ms. Witte explained her approach to the presenting the concept in a format that provides as much information as possible. The Concept Plan illustrates the proposed pathway

from the starting point at Shirttail Park on the Megunticook River to the newly proposed trail end at Harbor Park. Originally the trail ended at the Public Landing, but comments made at the first forum regarding the suitability of Harbor Park as an ending point made sense, and that change is shown as part of this concept.

- ❖ **Highlighting Opportunities:** Ms. Witte developed this preliminary legend using international symbols that will be used to illustrate the many opportunities to be found along the trails.



- ❖ **Natural Resources:** Natural resources in the corridor will be identified and mapped by Mike Thompson with two goals: To inform trail users of where there are opportunities to experience and learn about various natural resources like bird watching, fishing, vernal pools, wetland, etc.; and to give local entrepreneurs the information they need to take advantage of these resources to create new businesses. Mr. Thompson, a Camden resident, used the example of the business that promoting bird watching opportunities can bring to an area – it is a popular hobby and people travel to specific areas when it known for its bird-watching opportunities. A trail gives people easy access to these areas, and it is a chance for locals to develop value from these visitors by producing maps, giving tours, providing accommodations and meals, etc.
- ❖ **Trail Segments:** There are ten “gems” along the trail that have been named and numbered. Ms. Witte divided the trail into six segments and prepared blown-up illustrations of each segment showing details of the segments in an effort to provide users with even more information that will inform them ahead of walking the trail what they might expect. In addition to the legend, the following details will be provided for each trail segment:
 - Named and numbered locations that correlate to the master map
 - Distances between each point on the trail segment
 - Whether the segment links are existing or proposed (or both)
 - The existing or proposed trail surface material
 - Current ownership – whether Town owned or private
 - Adjacent Land Uses

- Interesting cultural features
- Natural features of interest
- Recreational Potential (boat launch/hiking, e.g.)
- Education/Interpretive Values
- Views and Visual Qualities
- Accessibility
- Interconnections
- Phasing Priority
- Permitting Considerations

❖ **Preliminary Permitting Overview – both projects:**

Mike Thompson found no “deal-breakers” – no endangered species that would stop either of the projects. But permits will be required:

- Specific projects will need site-specific wetland delineations
- Proposed bridge crossing would go through a more complex permitting process involving both DEP and the Army Corps of Engineers
- Ravines, steep slopes and some wetlands might require bridges
- A bridge over the harbor would be the most complex element to permit
- Trails in floodplain wetlands will likely need to be on boardwalks on piles and require more complex permitting also involving DEP and the Army Corps

❖ **Preliminary Phasing Plan**

Ms. Witte Explained the proposed “existing route” shown on the Concept Plan:

The existing components of the trail are all Town property at Shirttail Point, Seabright Park, the Library Park and the Amphitheater, and the Public Landing.

The entire trail from Shirttail Park to Harbor Park uses existing sidewalks or streets, except for the existing trails at Seabright Park. The Town has proposed a sidewalk running up Washington Street to Shirttail for many years so that sidewalk is shown on the Plan; in other areas where the trail follow streets, the recommendations will include installing sidewalks.

The proposed short-term trails sections are where trail sections would be installed on Town-owned property – the Tannery River Trail and the Middle School River Trail. The other component of the short-term phase is to install signage at all existing access points including signage Downtown directing people to the trail. They would like to see work on developing branding and sign designs at the very beginning of the project implementation.

The long-term sections are portions of trail segments that would require easements or are future trail extensions: 1) A connection to the trails at Camden Hills

State Park off Mountain Street; 2) The bridge at the Middle School to cross to the west side of the river; and 3) Explore links and visual access points in the downtown (Knox Mill)

When the final report and recommendations are presented with the Schematic Plan, Camden will have a Master Plan to follow whenever they are ready to implement any segment of the trail.

❖ **Questions:**

What will the trail surface consist of?

Sarah Witte: The Team is responsible for making the trail universally accessible wherever possible and will use materials that are responsive to this need including pavement, reclaim, wood or a combination of wood fiber and gravel. They understand that people want the portions of the trail that travel through natural areas to be more natural looking and that is what they have built into their recommendations. In the Downtown area and in places where they will be following the river they will move toward the harder surfaces to prevent erosion and siltation.

Leonard Lookner referred to the Charles River Trail in Boston - Olmstead's original Emerald Necklace, and asked if this Team would employ the same design feature of including a barrier between the sidewalk and the road when the sidewalk was the trail segment. This really helps define the trail, especially when the barrier is plantings.

Sarah Witte: She is familiar with the concept and they will recommend that trails have barriers when necessary to separate people from street traffic that are designed to be sustainable in this climate – perhaps rocks that can be removed for winter plowing. Whatever the material – even simple railings - the barrier needs to be long-lasting and easy and inexpensive for the Town to maintain.

Why does the trail leave Washington Street to travel up Rawson Avenue as the leg between the Tannery and Mechanic Street?

Sarah Witte: She walked both Rawson Avenue and Washington Street to get to Mechanic Street and on to Main Street. She thought there were better views of the River coming using this route – especially from Mechanic Street above the mill. In addition, there is a spur from Mechanic Street going up Knowlton Street toward the Middle School, and people may find that shorter and a more convenient way to reach the school.

How many easements will be required to complete the trail with the proposed short-term and long-term sections as shown?

Ms. Witte does not know at this time.

Why doesn't the Trail go from Mechanic Street down Tannery Lane using the right-of way past the Riverside Hotel out to Main Street to Harbor Park?

Sarah Witte: In addition to the hotel owner having a say over this path, they wanted to bring people to Main Street where they would have the option of going to the Public Landing or on up Main Street to the trail's end at Harbor Park.

Did any portion of the grant set aside money for long-term maintenance?

Sarah Witte: No; this grant is for the design phase of the project only. But, the Team will deliver estimates for the project that will include maintenance.

Karen Grove asked about signage: She knows that the State has mandated signage in areas accessible to the public that are below dams; is there also signage required along pathways warning of dams ahead?

Sarah Witte: No – just at the dam site itself.

Someone noted that one of the icons in Ms. Witte's legend is for ice fishing; he does not believe there is anywhere along the proposed trail where ice fishing is possible.

Ms Witte will double-check all her legend icons before the Plan is final to make sure they do apply.

Ray Andrioni asked how many river crossings were proposed.

Sarah Witte: Only one at the Middle School; the bridge over the harbor is *not* being recommended as part of this proposal. The Team heard the comments from the first Public Landing Public Forum - a clear majority of those attending did not like the concept of the bridge at the falls, and they want the Public Landing to stay as it is at this time with some improvements.

As shown on the concept trail segment between points 5 at the Tannery and 6 at the Middle School, a proposed long range section of the trail would go across a bridge over the river near the school and connect to a spur running along the bank of the river in both directions. Conversations are underway with a property owner about this possibility, and that is why that particular long-range section is shown on the plan.

3. Public Landing Project Approach: Darin Bryant

❖ Input From Community Forum #2:

The Team's goal has always been to keep both the landside and the waterside considerations in mind in developing their Plan. At the Public Forum the Team heard from both interests that the best use for the Landing is as a waterfront park that:

- Supports commercial fishing and boating enterprises;

- Improves pedestrian safety and lighting;
- Supports local businesses and events; and
- Provides parking – although it seemed to be the consensus that the number of spaces could be reduced.

In addition, and design must keep safety and maintainability by the Town in the forefront; and components of the design should be phased in as part of a long-term Master Plan for the Landing.

The first step was to assess the existing conditions in the area that had to remain in place – things like utility poles and fire hydrants. The Town’s sewer pump station and underground propane tanks near the public restroom must remain in place; this affects the flexibility of the design with regard to relocating the restroom and redirecting traffic flow.

Mr. Bryant provided a summary of the public comments from the Public Forum (#2) comments which drove the design:

1. Upgrade Restrooms
2. Move Harbor Master/Chamber of Commerce
3. Reduce Dedicated [Parking] Spaces for Charters or Re-locate the Spaces
4. Upgrade Commercial Street/Add Sidewalk to Minimize the Conflict of Pedestrian with Traffic
5. Keep Working Harbor, Natural Views, Ability to Drive to Edge of Harbor
6. Widen/Extend Boardwalk
7. Add Lighting
8. Add More “Green” Area (non-parking)
9. Add [Fishermen’s] Hoist
10. Avoid Impact to Sewerage Pumping Station/Manholes/Pipes

In order to address the sometimes conflicting goals expressed at the Forum the Team is offering two Concept Plans this evening. All proposals meet ADA requirements, the Camden Harbor Ordinance, and provisions of Title 38 of the Maine State Code as it applies to the Ordinance.

➤ **Concept Plan #1: Maintain the Majority of Parking:**

Parking: This Plan slightly reduces the number of dedicated parking spaces and *possibly* relocates them. The Team has not designated any spaces on the Plan itself – that will be

up to the Town to decide when the final layout of the parking is done. Currently there are 91 spaces – this design has 88 and provides the same number of handicap parking spaces (5) as there are now.

Improve the view from Commercial Street:

Two things impact this view – the location of the Harbor Master’s office, and the layout of the parking.

Parking Layout: The layout retains parking along the harbor, but not at the bottom of the lot directly down from Commercial Street where there is parking currently. That area is left open with some new green area and an area for a display of art or containers of flowers – whatever the Townspeople should want. Parking has been reconfigured into two islands with one-way traffic lanes and crosswalks for pedestrians. The view down Commercial Street will be open at the water’s edge but will still include parked cars on either side of the traffic lane. The Team calls it a “Slightly Improved” view.

Harbormaster’s Office: The building is relocated to the area near the Town floats.

Commercial Street: The Street is tight and steep, and adding two narrow sidewalks - one on each side - is complicated by having to deal with the entrances to the shops that front the street. A raised sidewalk would be the safest and easiest to navigate, but to keep the walkway at a good grade means it would rise above the thresholds of the shop entrances – they are still examining this possibility but need more information. A change in surface materials to designate level sidewalks is another possibility. Improving the alleyway that runs from Main Street to the Landing means that pedestrians can be directed to this access point and away from Commercial Street - this will work to reduce the conflicts. The Plan does show crosswalks to help direct pedestrians crossings of traffic lanes.

Pocket Park: The Plan relocates the Bell Buoy at the top of the Landing and adds picnic tables and a much improved green area to create a small park with a view of the waterfall.

The Boardwalk: The Boardwalk is lengthened at its present width to follow the head of the Harbor around to the pocket park; and it is widened at its current location to improve safety and re

Day Sailers’ and Charter Boats: Create a drop-off area for boat crews and passengers to load and off-load gear. Create a “Welcome Area” for day boat ticket sellers to locate their tables and umbrellas instead of having them right on the Boardwalk.

Railings: The Team is still researching whether or not using Federal grant money for improvements will come with the requirement that railings are installed along portions of the Boardwalk. They already understand that the areas dedicated to fishing and other commercial uses *do not* require railings.

Lighting: The Team has added lighting fixtures and can offer recommendations for several “down lighted” fixtures to minimize the impact.

Snow Removal: The Team consulted with the Public Works Director regarding snow removal, snow stockpiling, and snow dumping needs and the design retains the current situation.

Hoist Platform [New float as well?]: The hoist is located so it is convenient for fishermen and charter boats who want to use the hoist to load (and unload) their boats as well. It is also convenient to the Harbor Master’s office in its new location. *IF* railings are required along this section of the Boardwalk, the railings at the end of the hoist platform will be removable in design.

➤ **Concept Plan #2: Increase Non-Parking Uses at the Landing:**

Parking: This Plan reduces the number of parking spaces from 91 to 67 and provides the same number of handicap parking spaces (5) as there are now. In considering this decrease the Team took into consideration the fact that they have been told that 10% - 15% of the spaces are currently used by employees of Downtown businesses. There have been efforts before to get them to park elsewhere to free up spaces, and now that there is more parking available Downtown, perhaps a new effort to make this happen would be successful.

Improve the view from Commercial Street:

The parking is around the top and sides of a single large parking island and traffic is one-way with improved circulation. The center of that island is open and crossed by walking paths to move pedestrians freely around the lot. The Harbor Master’s Shack remains relocated as in Concept #1. The view is now “Greatly Improved” with much more open space available for other uses.

Remove Existing Restrooms: The restrooms are moved to an expanded Chamber-of-Commerce Building which will also house shower and laundry facilities for visitors

See Concept #1 for proposals for plans for Commercial Street, a Pocket Park, The Boardwalk, Day Sailers’ and Charter Boats, Railings, Lighting, Snow Removal, and the Hoist Platform.

Mr. Bryant then showed examples of different kinds of railings, curbing and flush pedestrian routes including sidewalks and crosswalks, and exterior lighting fixtures. This presentation will be available on the Town’s website at: <http://www.camdenmaine.gov> . Follow the Riverwalk and Public Landing link from the Banner; on the project home page find the link to Community Meetings.

➤ **Questions:**

Are railings required now or only if changes are made to the Boardwalk?

Mr. Bryant said that they are still doing research; this is a complicated issue and they are trying to obtain the best information. Dan Brannon from Baker Consultants explained that the commercial areas are covered by OSHA requirements which apply instead of the ADA, and OSHA does not require railings. But the question of funding and where the money comes from raises other questions about which requirements rule. Further complicating the issue is a recent Maine court decision involving the absence of railings on the Town Pier in Bar Harbor. A woman who fell from the pier sued the Town and prevailed in this decision; the consequences of that decision to towns like Camden are unknown.

Questions about railings were raised again when someone asked if Camden was in compliance with the ADA at this point in time if there were no railings. Others asked if the requirement apply *only if* a change is made to the area, does it apply if funding comes from a source other than the federal government, or are they required now? Neither Mr. Bryant nor Mr. Brannon knew the answer to those questions, but said they would continue to research the issue.

This is a major construction project, when would it happen – what time of year?

Mr. Bryant replied that it depends on when the Town obtains funding. How much they receive will determine which part of the project can be done and when. It would be very expensive to undertake this project all at one time, and the Team envisions a phased project guided by the Master Plan.

Leonard Lookner, referring to the examples shown of railings and surface materials suggested that, unlike the River Walk project, this part of the project missed what Camden wants to see when the project is finished. He asked if there were still benches on the Boardwalk – the answer is yes; he asked where the Hot Dog Stand was in Concept #1 – Mr. Bryant replied that it would be there, it was simply overlooked in preparing the drawing. Mr. Lookner went on to add that he thinks Concept #1 has some merit; Concept #2 misses because the Town needs a level parking lot to be able to plow in the winter so that is a wasted proposal. He also thinks so much attention being paid to designing the parking based on improving the view from Commercial Street is wasted. Drivers should be paying attention to where they are driving – not looking at the view. Besides – they are headed toward the harbor where they will have a view.

John Scholz argued for leaving the bridge at the falls in the proposal as an option for discussion. He believes it is feasible and made his arguments for how it would be an attraction to Camden and would not detract to Main Street businesses. It is feasible to build and it should be on a long range plan.

Someone from the audience said that he disagreed with Mr. Scholz and that attendees at the last meeting said loudly “No bridge” – leave it off the Plan.

A speaker thinks the Plans both miss moving delivery trucks around the Landing; it is not just box trucks that deliver to Main Street and businesses off the Landing, but tractor trailers.

Mr. Bryant replied that this was taken into consideration and the turns can be made by large trucks.

Someone else spoke from the audience that they believe the Town will incur liability *if* railings are installed; without them the liability is reduced.

Someone else replied that remains to be seen with the Bar Harbor law suit.

Some of the examples shown did not look like low-impact lighting – why do the poles have to be tall? Why can’t there be low-level lighting shining just where people walk?

Mr. Bryant replied that there is existing lighting, and there can be a mix of that and low-level lighting – it is up to the Town to decide what they want. The pictures were meant to be examples of what kinds of designs are available, not recommendations.

The captain of a day sail boat asked where the idea of moving the sales tables off the Boardwalk came from – he has never heard it mentioned before this. Camden is unique in the way the set up is now with the sales people setting up tables on the Boardwalk. There have been other places that had a common sales booth and they did not do well. He thinks they should have been involved. In addition, there is one dock that houses multiple day boats, and this area would be further away from that float.

Mr. Bryant replied that the attempt is to make it clear to visitors where to go to get information on sailing out of the harbor. Anita Brosius-Scott added that there might be a design feature like a Moss Para-wing - a design that resembles a sail - that would draw attention to the area and attract even more visitors. Someone later clarified that the concept was to have all the sales tables in one place together and not to have one booth selling tickets for all boats.

Did the designers ever consider burying utilities so the poles don’t have to be such a prominent feature?

It would be up to the Town to decide if they want to afford that or not – it is good to put on a wish list.

Why isn’t the alleyway color coded as a pedestrian way?

Mr. Bryant replied that was an oversight and it will be corrected on the final plan.

➤ **Next Steps:**

July/August 2013: Meet with Committee, go over feedback and discuss features of preferred concepts:

- Finalize preferred concepts
- Identify permitting needs
- Develop preliminary-level cost estimates
- Perform economic impact analyses and determine possible funding sources

September 9, 2013: Presentation of Preferred Design Concepts

September 23, 2013: Submittal of Schematic Designs

➤ **Open-House Review and Comments:**

Sarah Witte invited everyone to review the full-size concept posters that were situated around the perimeter of the room. Members of the Team will be stationed at those posters and sticky notes and pens will be made available for people to post their notes on the area of the poster where their comment applies. There will also be sheets asking “Yes”, “No” and “Maybe” to check off individuals’ overall opinions of the proposal.

The Team will gather all those comments and use them in preparing the “Preferred Design.”

At 8 pm, Mr. Hodges thanked everyone for coming as people made their way to the posters to comment and discuss these options with the Team.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Hollingsworth, Recording Secretary